[Lazarus, Mary and Martha]

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LIFE HISTORY

TITLE: LAZARUS, MARY and MARTHA

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Name of Person Interviewed Rev. Andrew Hartley(white) (Baptist Preacher)

Fictitious Name Mr. Drew Yardley

Street Address 108 Sumter Street

Place Columbia, South Carolina

Occupation Preacher

Name of Writer Mattie T. Jones

Name of Reviser State Office

“That was Taylor on the 'phone, Annie,” Reverend Drew Yardley told his sister. “I told him definitely that I could not take the car right now anyway. We still owe $100 on the frigidaire. And we gave so much to charity before Christmas, when there was so much needed, that I can't see my way clear to assume this added debt for a new car now. So that question is settled and out of the way.” And the “Bishop”, as this brother is called, seated himself near the glowing coal fire.

“Well, Drew, folks don't never miss what they ain't had, and we won't know the difference a hundred years from now. Besides, I bet my old hat folks wouldner knowed us ridin' in a brand new car. An' we ain't none of us got any new clothes to match up with a new car; so it's just as well for us to keep goin' in the old one.

“That old green car's preached more funerals than any ten automobiles in Columbia put together,” Miss Annie continued. “It's a shame the way it's went ahead of all those fine hearses. It's looked right disgraceful going along with the best looking and the finest automobiles in the city. And it's hauled more people to the hospital, grown women and little children. Course, sometimes they was too sick to go in it, and we'd have to get an ambulance. But you'd always see that old green car come chug-a loog-ing right behind the fine ambulance. It carried one woman from the Columbia Hospital, not long ago, twenty-four miles in the country. We made a bed for her and put her on the back seat, and I nursed her head in my lap all the way. She wasn't able to hire an automobile, you know.”

“You'll please excuse me for a few minutes. Leroy wants to see me on business,” Mr. Yardley said, as he left the room, followed by a nicely-dressed young man who had just been admitted to the Yardley's home.

“People call me Martha?” Miss Annie exclaimed as conversation was resumed. “Never knowed nothin' 'bout 'em calling me that. Don't fit me atall. I'm too mean for anything like that.” After a pause, “I reckon I just as well start telling you about our folks till Drew comes back. I believe you said that's what you come for. Our grandfather and our grandmother come from England. You remember that time when so many immigrants come over here straight from England? Well, they come with 'em. I 3 reckon that's the reason we're so mean - got so much English blood in us. Folks tell me them English people's the meanest people in the world. Anyway, as I was fixing to tell you, my grandparents come from there

and settled near Batesburg, just one mile in the country. They owned their farm, but I don't know whether the King give it to 'em or not. All I know is my father inherited it.

“My mother was a Dutchman, I reckon you'd call her. She come from Georgia over here. Just like lots of other people, she was born and partly raised in Georgia. But after her mother died, she came over here to live with a couple what didn't have no children. They lived about seven or eight miles from my grandfather's home, and my father fell in love with my mother the first time he ever seen her. And it wasn't long till they got married. There was ten of us children, but they're all gone now but just us three. Our father died with cancer when he was sixty years old; and my mother was an invalid for ten years. She couldn't do a thing, couldn't even wash a pocket handkerchief. I tell you we younguns had to rough and tough it. We had plenty of children and nothin' else. No property and no means to do anything with. I was just four years old when my father died and left five little children.

“Where I got my education? Well, that's a joke, I never got one hardly atall. I went to Batesburg to school some and to old Tom Branch School. That's a school out in the country. I'm tellin' you, we was raised from hand to mouth. If I coulder got a good education, I wouldn't been 'round here. I woulder been in the foreign fields. All my life, since I've been big enough to know anything, I've wanted to be a foreign missionary. Yes, ma'am, I shore woulder went across the water. South America was where 4 I wanted to go, but I woulder been glad to go anywhere. Course, they wouldn't let me go with no more education than I've got.

“And then I ain't never been very strong, either. Couldn't never work in the mill on account of my health. I used to do right smart of field work, one time in my life. Yes'm, I look well and strong. That's what everybody tells me, but I ain't strong. It's been my lungs. They were awful bad. I used to spit up a whole pint of blood at one time, but I ain't had no hemorrhage now in twenty-six or twenty-seven years. Doctor X-rayed 'em not long ago,

and he says there's very little the matter now. Just a scar that's all healed over now, you know. But, of course, that scar could break right easy, and I'll always have to be careful.

“Yes'm, I have plenty of fresh air, I keep a window up every night, but I don't have no regular sleeping porch. And I can't drink no milk hardly and can't eat no cheese and no fish and no canned goods, like pottage ham. We just get one quart of milk every day for all of us, it's so expensive. We like vegetables for dinner, except my brother won't sit at the table if there's onions on it. And ain't they good, cut up with cucumbers, to eat with beans?”

“Well, Annie,” said Mr. Yardley, after seeing the young man to the door, “LeRoy came over to tell me the members of my church have made up some money and will make a down payment of $128 on a new car. Then I think I can take care of the other payments out of my salary of $1,500. I use my car for other people's needs, and I think the money will come somehow. The old 1928 model A Ford's plumb worn out. It has more than 100,000 miles on it, and it's not rated for work any more. The new 1939 Plymouth will cost $786.50. But the car man will give me $100 on the old car, and 5 that's as good as giving it to me, for he can't sell it for a thing in the world. And then they will give me $100 as a gift, LeRoy says, and I know one of the firm is a good strong Methodist, too. They said they appreciate the fact that I use my car, without compensation, for everybody who needs it, regardless of where they live.”

“Well, ain't that just too good to be true?” was the comment of the appreciative sister. “I'm so glad we've got a new car I don't know what to do or what to say. You know every time we took anybody who was much sick in the old rattle trap, I was scared plumb to death the old thing would break down in the middle of the road. When will you bring it home, Brother?”

“Tomorrow morning. We'll take the trip to the country to get the sick child in it, I think.”

“How will I feel riding in a new car? That's what somebody else done asked me. And I told 'em just like I felt in the old green Ford, only I'll have a trunk behind this one. And I can lay

a paper down and pack up more rations and old clothes and old shoes and everything in that trunk. In the old car, I had to pile 'en all up on the back seat."

"I reckon," Mr. Yardley added, very humbly, we've bought more shoes than any dozen people in Columbia put together and paid more insurance premiums and doctor's bills and drug bills and every other sort of bills. We've bought more rations, clothes, shoes, and school books. My sakes alive, we've bought 'em. Why, oftentimes I've given the last dollar I possessed, but I've done it for the good of people who were in need and, I think, for the glory of God. You know His promise to those who give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of these. ' And I've done all I've done with 6 nothing to depend on but God's promise. With all my failures, and I've got plenty of them, He has never failed me once.

"Results in their lives? Why, they're so helpless with their suffering needs, I don't ever think about the results to them, but of what it means to me. I can't think of anything except the joy I get out of doing it.

"My life's a riddle, even to me. Why I'm not in a gutter somewhere now I can't explain. I'll lead up to the facts. My father died when I was ten years old. He had been afflicted for several years with cancer. He went everywhere he could hear of somebody who had every helped anybody else. He'd run to one doctor, then borrow a little more money and run to some one else, till he run up a debt of $l,000. So, finally, all our property was sold for debt, and we were turned out to live or die. We had to go somewhere so we went to sharecrop with a neighbor. He agreed to furnish the fertilizer, the mule, and the land, and he got half the crop. Cotton brought only five cents that year; but I made ten bales. And we had corn, peas, potatoes, and meat enough to do us. We stayed there three years. Then we moved several times. Finally, I overseed for Dr. Crosson, the same man I had farmed with once before. I was going on to tell you I hadn't been to school since I was ten years old, but I had learned to read and write and figure fairly good. I must have some genius in mathematics, for I had to keep all the books and business straight and attend to a lumber mill, a corn mill, a cotton gin and a 35-acre farm. With a salary of $50 a month, I made

more money than I ever made in my life. I had a sharecrop besides. My sisters were both able to work then, and that your we cleared $400.

“The next year, my mother was an invalid all year and desperately ill much of the time. Sister Annie was ill, too. The doctor came to the house 7 135 times during that year. We lived in Leesville, but just before Christmas we moved to the mill in Batesburg, and in February my mother died. I got a job in the mill inspecting and grading cloth at 90 cents a day, and Corrie, that's my other sister, got 85 cents for tacking and labeling it. We stayed there three years, and before we left we were getting $1.25 and $1.00 a day.

“We heard we could make more in Columbia, so we moved here. I had accumulated some debt, but I was honest enough to want to pay it. After we worked at Granby for six weeks, we all went down with measels. Long weeks dragged by, yes months, and I did not recover sufficiently to work in the mill again. So we went back to Leesville to farm with Smith again. Then the next year we went back/ to Batesburg to another mill job, because Corrie could get a job, too.

“I'd always felt like I'd like to preach, but there were so many hindrances - sickness in the family, a lack of education, burdened with problems - that I put it off from time to time. The mill church at Batesburg urged me to enter the ministry, and I did. I preached at that church two or three times a month during 1911, and studied every other night with private teachers for two years. Those teachers offered, with such beautiful spirit, to help me, and I can never forget them. But because of friction in the mill work we moved back to Columbia, and in 1915, I was invited to preach at the Broadway Baptist Church. There were twelve people to hear me; twelve people, I mean; not eleven or thirteen, but an even dozen. At the second service, the crowd increased to twenty-five or thirty. Then they called me to be their pastor. There were eight members, and they offered me a salary of only eight dollars a month. This organization was an experiment, and it 8 had seemingly failed. Finally, with the help of the mill company and the state mission board, they raised the salary to $85. After one year, South Side Baptist Church agreed to pay $50 if Broadway

would pay $50, and I divided my time, giving half to South Side as assistant pastor. The church was then self-sustaining.

“In these twenty-three years that I've been here as pastor, the membership has grown from 8 to 409. At least 1,000 people have come into the church, mostly by baptism. I can tell you, things have improved a lot in these years, too. Then few homes had a fitten chair to sit in. Now these same people have far better furniture than their preacher. They have suits of furniture that cost $75 and $100, electric or gas ranges, frigidaires and everything up-to-date.”

“I reckon they have got better things,” mused Miss Annie. “We ain't got nothing. Just the same old things we had then, 'cept we have got a frigidaire.”

“The morals are 100 per cent better, too,” Mr. Yardley continued. They were at a low ebb when I came here. This territory was considered a dumping ground for scalawags and ignoramuses. Awful conditions existed here. I guess I preached fifty funerals in homes where no preacher would go. When I'd hear of sorrow, I'd just go to the home and say, 'This experience is too sacred for you to run off to the cemetery without any ceremony at all, and I'm glad to do anything for you that I can.' And then I'd have a service and we'd follow the 'black wagon' in the old green car for the burial at the cemetery. I know I've conducted at least 500 funerals since I've been here. But education and culture get much more attention now.

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“I felt so keenly my lack of an education that, the first year I was in Columbia, I began a prescribed course at the University of South Carolina and a theological course at the Presbyterian Seminary. I kept it up for three years, and no money could buy this experience from me. It's simply unsalable. And all it cost me was the $40 I paid for my books. It brought out hidden things that never could have been revealed without some education or opportunity like that. And it gave me a fairly good English education. I didn't

get a diploma, but I did get a credit slip for work I had done. My language was far from perfect, but I know when I 'break', and I just go right ahead as if I hadn't made any error. This training enables me to exercise the highest gifts given me by God. I am sometimes asked what the requirements for a good preacher are, according to my way of thinking, and I mention these four things: 1. Common sense. 2. A good case of religion. 3. All education complete. 4. A man must learn how to mingle with people and how to serve them acceptably. Tact, I sometimes says is the ability to take a deadly sting out of a deadly stinger and not get stung.

“I think my sermons out and then I pray 'em out. Positive preaching is what people need. I try to tell them what they should do, rather than what they should not do. Some fellows, for instance, preach every Sunday against picture shows. Well, I don't approve of going to shows myself, but I don't preach against 'em. I reckon there are some good ones, and we shouldn't turn as helpful a thing as that can be entirely over to the devil.

“What do I do for recreation? I don't have any, unless you call work play. Never had a vacation in my life. I go to the Southern Baptist Convention and to the State conventions, and that's all I ever do outside of my work. I don't reckon I've been on Main Street twenty-three times after 10 dark in the twenty-three years I've been In Columbia. Unless I'm out on my work, I'm at home. I got up at six o'clock and go to bed at seven-thirty. Punctuality in a sort of hobby of mine. An obligation is as sacred to me as life itself. I believe in meeting one the moment it is due, not tomorrow.

“We stay pretty close 'round home, unless we're called out to work. I would have liked to have seen President Roosevelt when he was here. I was given a reserved seat and went up in my car, but it began to rain so hard I just came back home. I hesitate to criticize those in authority, but I think several things about Roosevelt. First, I think his intentions are good, but I think he has put wrong men at the head of many things. Then I think he didn't give the Lord the real consideration he ought to have given Him. Did things on the Sabbath day he ought not to have done, like Sunday fishing. A Christian ought not to do

such things, though possibly he won't go to hell because of them. But I'm old-timey enough to think a man who is leading a great Nation like the United States ought to stay mighty close to God."

"Go with Brother?" Miss Annie asked. "Lord, no. When he goes off, I have to stay here to 'tend the church. No, ma'am, I don't never preach. But I've rung the bell and built the fires and took care of the church and yards ever since we've been here. Yes, honey, I get eight dollars a month for it, but I never see any of it."

"It's all partnership money," her brother added. "We don't know whose money it is. What belongs to one belongs to all in this household.

"I'm about to forget to tell you about our other sister, Corrie. She is fifty-eight years old and her health is desperately poor. She had typhoid dysentery when she was twelve years old, and she's never been well 11 since. There's as much difference in hers and Annie's dispositions as there is in day and night. Corrie takes care of our home and doesn't care much about making new friends, although she loves her friends devotedly, and she's very loyal. She'd do anything in the world for either of us. Annie is more pleasant to deal with and is interested in helping everybody who needs her. Annie's on the go all the time - to church, to homes where there's sickness and need, carrying children to clinics, and begging wood and coal, clothes, and something to eat, for the needy. I know we're the terriblest beggars of all folks in the world. Nobody ever has begged like we have for other folks."

"I do want to tell you folks about a little boy we helped sometime ago," Miss Annie said. "His mother was a grass widow with five children and no way to support them. The baby one was a boy and an invalid. His legs crossed just like this," - and she showed with her arms the position that made it impossible for the child to walk. "He couldn't walk a step. Every time he'd try, his legs would fold up under his body and he'd go pushing himself around, sitting on his folded legs. I carried him to the Columbia Hospital to specialists, I

know, twenty-five or thirty times. Finally, when he was four years old, I carried him to Dr. Barden. I knew he could help him. But, honey, he never done him one speck of good. Honestly, I toted that child around for three years, till sometimes I'd almost see stars. One day when I was cleaning up the churchyard, out there all by myself, something said to me, 'Why don't you take that child to Dr. Brent?' It came to me just like a whiff of anything, for an instant, and then it was gone like it come. I studied and studied about that thing, and when Drew come home, I said to him, 'Drew, suppose we carry Marvin to Dr. Brent, the 12 chiropractor." 'Well,'he says, " carry him if you want to, but it ain't going to do any good.'

"Corrie had eczema so bad her arms were all raw, with big pus bumps on 'em clean to her elbows, and we was taking her to the chiropractor. He was helping her, but she had seventy-five adjustments before she got over it. Yes, sir, we paid him $79 for them. So one day when we was taking her to the doctor, I went by and got Marvin. When he got through with Corrie, I said; 'Doctor Brent, do you ever take any charity work?' 'Yes, sometimes,' he says like that. "Well, I've got a little boy out here in the car that can't walk, and I want you to try to help the little fellow if you will.' Don't you know he just give him four adjustments, and he was walking good as anybody. His ma and all of us shore was tickled about it. He's eight years old and in school now, and his teacher says he's got a good mind, too.

"This is a flower Mr. Dunbar's grandchild in Camden sent me. Granger sends me one mighty near every Christmas. I think it is called a melior begonia. I know it growed in a greenhouse I certainly think it's beautiful. We had a fine Christmas. A turkey? I say a turkey. No, we had fried chicken and a fruit cake and some crispy breakfast strip. Drew can't eat much meat since he had sinus trouble so bad and had to have his teeth took out. I tried to make a plain cake, too, but forgot to put anything in it to rise it. It looks like I don't know what. I carried half of it to a woman who didn't have much for Christmas. It tastes better than it looks, though. I took her little boy to the hospital and had his tonsils took out, and she 'preciates it more'n anything. Our neighbor, Miss Sharpe, sent us over a nice basket of turkey and boiled ham and all sorts of cakes and pies and things, and I added some fruit and things to it and sent out six nice 13 baskets to folks what needed it."

Laughing, she continued, “Corrie says when anybody gives me anything specially nice, I take and pass it on to somebody else instead of leaving it for us.

“We had a Christmas tree for the children in Sunday School the night before Christmas. The mill company gives us fifteen cents for each child. That gives us $60, and we bought fruit and candy and nuts and raisins and filled a bag for every child. Were there many children there to get the bags? We filled 400, and I think there are only four left over there now. The mill company does lots of such things, but they are not extreme in their liberty.”

“Say, why don't you shut that door and come on in out of that cold night air?” A harsh voice called from the next room. “Don't you know night air ain't good for anybody? I can't sleep till you all get quiet.”

“Honey, don't you mind my sister,” Miss Annie whispered. She don't mean a bit o' harm by being like that. There's something the matter with her. She ain't right bright. You understand.”

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